

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SECRETARY'S TRIP TO AFRICA: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON
MOBUTU SESE SEKO, PRESIDENT OF ZAIRE

REF: STATE 095877 KINSHASA A-44

1. SUMMARY: AN AMBITIOUS AND CAPABLE POLITICAN, MOBUTU
ASPIRES TO INTERNATIONAL GREATNESS. HE ADROITLY GENERATES
AN IMAGE OF POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE FROM A BASE OF UNEXPLOITED
POTENTIAL. YET HE IS A POOR ADMINISTRATOR, MORE CONCERNED
WITH THE CENTRALITY OF HIS POSITION IN THE DECISION-MAKING
PROCESS THAN WITH THE SMOOTH EXECUTION OF POLICY. A POLITICAL
REALIST, MOBUTU TRUSTS NO ONE ABSOLUTELY, REMAINS FLEXIBLE IN
HIS FOREIGN POLICY, AND BARGAINS SHREWDLY. END SUMMARY.

2. POLITICAL POSITION: MOBUTU SESE SEKO IS A SKILLFUL
POLITICAN WHO HAS BROUGHT TO ZAIRE TEN YEARS OF RELATIVE PEACE
FOLLOWING THE CHAOTIC PERIOD OF POST-INDEPENDENCE REGIONAL
STRIFE. BUT HE IS NEITHER AN ECONOMIST NOR AN ADMINISTRATOR.
HE IS INCLINED TO RELY ON TEMPORARY POLITICAL SOLUTIONS,
EVEN WHEN PROBLEMS DEMAND LONG RANGE ECONOMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE
ACTIONS. THROUGH A COMBINATION OF INTERNATIONAL MARKET FACTORS
AND POOR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT, MOBUTU HAS LOST CONTROL OF HIS
COUNTRY'S ECONOMY. TODAY, ZAIRE SUFFERS FROM LARGE FOREIGN
EXCHANGE DEBITS AND DIMINISHED AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL
PRODUCTIVITY. THE PEOPLE RESENT THE HIGH PRICES,
UNAVAILABILITY OF CERTAIN FOODS AND MEDICINES, AND THE

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FALSE PROMISES OF GOVERNMENT. MOBUTU IS IN AN EXPOSED POLI-

TICAL POSITION. HE SKILLFULLY USES, HOWEVER, THREE BASIC FACTORS WHICH SUSTAIN HIM: (A) A LOYAL ARMY, (B) THE ABSENCE OF ANY OTHER LEADER OF PROMISE AND (C) THE PEOPLE'S FEAR OF CHAOS WHICH COULD RESULT FROM CHANGES IN THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE.

3. IN AFRICA, MOBUTU ENJOYS A DEGREE OF RESPECT FROM OTHER LEADERS, THOUGH CERTAINLY THIS HAS DIMINISHED AS THE RESULT OF THE ZAIRIAN/FNLA/UNITA DEFEAT IN ANGOLA. MOBUTU'S MAIN PREOCCUPATION NOW IS TO ARRIVE AT AN ACCEPTABLE ACCOMMODATION WITH NETO AND TO PREVENT ZAIRE FROM BEING ISOLATED IN THE MIDST OF A LEFTWARD MOVING CENTRAL/SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN ORDER TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO BARGAIN CLOSELY AND SHIFT POSITIONS WITH STRIKING RAPIDITY. HE IS PERSONALLY COMMITTED TO NO AFRICAN LEADER. HE IS PERHAPS CLOSEST TO THOSE HE CAN DOMINATE, LIKE HIS NEIGHBOR BOKASSA. (CAR) DESPITE SIMILAR OBJECTIVES IN ANGOLA, MOBUTU'S RELATIONS WITH KAUNDA ARE NOT APRTICULARLY CLOSE. HE GENERALLY DISTRUSTS NYERERE. HE REGARDS AMIN AS A FOOL, AT ONCE USEFUL AND DANGEROUS BECAUSE OF THE EASE WITH WHICH THE UGANDAN CAN BE INCLUENCED BY OUTSIDERS. MOBUTU NEEDS AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE AND HE KNOWS IT. HE CAN BE EXPECTED, HOWEVER, TO BALANCE THIS NECESSITY AGAINST THAT OF STRIKING A POSTURE IN AFRICA SUFFICIENTLY "PROGRESSIVE" AS TO ENABLE HIM TO EXERT LEADERSHIP.

4. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS: MOBUTU IS A PRAGMATIST WHO UNDERSTANDS THE ELEMENTS OF POWER. AMBITIOUS, HE IS EVER WATCHFUL OF A CHANGE IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH WOULD ENABLE HIM TO INCREASE THE STRENGHT OF HIS POSITION. HE IS OUTGOING AND SELF-CONFIDENT. HE DELIBERATELY ADOPTS THE MANNER OF A TRADITIONAL AFRICAN CHIEF; AND HE CONSIDERS HIMSELF TO BE THE SAVIOR AND FOUNDER OF THE ZAIRIAN NATION. HE IS VAIN AND PROUD AND IS SUSCEPTIBLE TO FLATTERY. HE ENJOYS PUBLIC CEREMONIES AND CAN SIT OR SPEAK FOR HOURS UNDER A TROPICAL SUN WITHOUT VISIBLE SIGNS OF FATIGUE. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATION, HE CAN BE CHARMING, AMUSING AND CHALLENGING, ALWAYS IN A SELF-CENTERED WAY. HIS READING HAS BEEN EXTENSIVE (IT INCLUDES
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SOME U.S. MILITARY HISTORY) AND HE SELDOM MISSES AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF HIS SURPRISINGLY RETENTIVE MEMORY. HE HAS A HIGH REGARD FOR INTELLECTUAL ACHIEVEMENT AND WELCOMES NEW IDEAS AND NEW EXPERIENCES. HE BELIEVES THAT HE UNDERSTANDS AMERICANS QUITE WELL AND IS AN ARDENT LISTENER TO THE VOICE OF AMERICA NEWS BROADCASTS IN FRENCH. HE HAS ON SEVERAL RECENT OCCASIONS EXPRESSED HIS DISMAY REGARDING WHAT HE VIEWS AS A DIMINISHING AMERICAN

RESOLVE TO FULFILL ITS ROLE AS A WORLD LEADER. IN THIS REGARD, THE IMPACT ON ZAIRE OF THE ANGOLAN EXPERIENCE REMAINS FRESH IN HIS MIND.

5. POLITICAL VIEWS: UNTIL 1973 MOBUTU WAS CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE UNITED STATES. TO THROW OFF HIS IMAGE AS AN AMERICAN AGENT, HE BEGAN MOVING AWAY FROM THE U.S., NOTABLY WITH HIS THIRD-WORLD ORIENTED U.N. SPEECH IN OCTOBER 1973. ZAIRIANIZATION AND RADICALIZATION, WHICH AMOUNTED TO AN ASSAULT ON WESTERN ECONOMIC INTERESTS IN ZAIRE, FURTHER ENHANCED HIS ANTI-IMPERIALIST IMAGE AND COOLED HIS RELATIONS WITH THE WEST. THE CLIMAX OF THIS TREND WAS THE JUNE 1975 "COUP MANQUE", IN WHICH THE U.S. WAS IDENTIFIED AS THE CULPRIT, EXPLICITLY BY THE OFFICIAL PRESS AND IMPLICITLY BY MOBUTU. HOWEVER, WITH HIS GROWING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND INVOLVEMENT IN ANGOLA, MOBUTU REAPIDLY TURNED AROUND LAST SUMMER AND EFFECTED A RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE U.S. THE MAN IS ABOVE ALL A PRAGMATIST AND HIGHLY UNPREDICTABLE, AND IT IS THEREFORE UNCERTAIN HOW LONG THE CURRENT PRO-U.S. PHASE WILL LAST.

6. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT MOBUTU REGARDS THE SOVIET UNION WITH THE UTMOST SUSPICION. MOBUTU FEARS THE POTENTIAL DOMESTIC THREAT POSED BY THE LONG-EXILED OPPOSITIONIST, GIZENGA, AND HE SEES RUSSIA AS GIZENGA'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORTER. IN A MORE IMMEDIATE SENSE, MOBUTU FEELS THREATENED BY THE LARGE SOVIET PRESENCE TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF ZAIRE IN CONGO AND ANGOLA. THE SENSE OF INSECURITY ARISING FROM THIS SITUATION, COMBINED WITH MOBUTU'S DESIRE TO CREATE OF ZAIRE A SIGNIFICANT THIRD WORLD POWER, CAUSES HIM TO PRESS FOR CONSIDERABLE AMERICAN SECURITY ASSISTANCE. NOR DOES MOBUTU LIMIT HIMSELF TO AMERICAN SOURCES OF AID. IN HIS HOUR OF NEED, HE IS
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TURNING ALSO TO FRANCE, GERMANY, AND BELGIUM, PARTICULARLY THE LATTER. IN RECENT MONTHS, HE HAS PROCLAIMED A NEW WARMTH IN RELATIONS WITH THE FORMER METROPOLE

7. IT SHOULD BE REITERATED, HOWEVER, THAT MOBUTU PERCEIVES OF HIMSELF AS AN AFRICAN LEADER. AS LONG AS WESTERN INTERESTS COINCIDE WITH HIS IN AFRICA, HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO BE COOPERATIVE. AT THE MOMENT THAT MOBUTU SENSES THAT ZAIRIAN INTERESTS IN AFRICA ARE SERIOUSLY COMPROMISED BY ALIGNMENT WITH THE WEST, HE WILL HASTEN TO DETACH HIMSELF FROM HIS FORMER FRIENDS.

8. BEHAVIOR IN NEGOTIATIONS: MOBUTU IS A TOUGH, WILY NEGOTIATOR. WITH A FINE POLITICAL SENSE, HE CREATES AN IMAGE OF POWER WHERE POWER MIGHT OTHERWISE NOT EXIST. HE

IS NOT NECESSARILY CONCERNED THAT ALL HIS UTTERANCES BE BELIEVABLE; HE MERELY EXPECTS THE OTHER PLAYERS TO ACT AS IF THEY WERE SO.

9. MOBUTU COMES ON STRONG AND HE IS WILLING TO ARGUE HIS CASE. UNDOUBTEDLY, DURING THE SECRETARY'S VISIT, HE WILL FORCEFULLY ATTEMPT TO PROJECT ZAIRE AS THE SINGLE BEST HOPE OF THE WEST IN AFRICA. HE IS CERTAINLY WILLING TO SAY WHAT HE BELIEVES THE AMERICANS WISH TO HEAR (E.G., ZAIRE'S WILLINGNESS TO HELP ON SUCH ISSUES AS ISRAELI SUSPENSION AND TWO WORK DISCREETLY AGAINST COMMUNIST-BACKED RADICALS IN AFRICA). BUT HE WILL BE EQUALLY CLEAR IN WHAT HE WANTS MOST IN RETURN: MORE ECONOMIC AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE HE CAN BE EXPECTED TO LEAVE THE DISCUSSION OF MODALITIES TO SUCH MEN AS BISENGIMANA AND NGUZA.
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